

MAHARODDAN + HOME

TYNARRE

SPRING 2000

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Illinois Springfield Home

Mary Todd Lincoln and the Home

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

REBUILDING THE HOME.

Living in the suburbs of Springfield is a pioneer who aided Lincoln in building the flatboat on the Sangamon River above New Salem in 1831. His name is John B. Roll, and his story of the building of that flatboat has been told so often that it does not need repetition. Roll was at the time 18 years of age, and Lincoln was 22. They were working for \$14 a month from daylight to dark.

"Lincoln was a terrible-looking, awkward man," said Mr. Roll. "He was dressed in blue jeans pantaloons, roundabout jacket, and a hat with a small crown and a high brim. He was so big that everything seemed too short. His pantaloons were four inches above his boots, and when he bent over in chopping his roundabout jacket showed four inches of his suspenders. He was so long he could beat almost any one in chopping."

Even at that early day Lincoln was a story teller, and Mr. Roll recalls how he used to entertain the boys in front of the place where they lived.

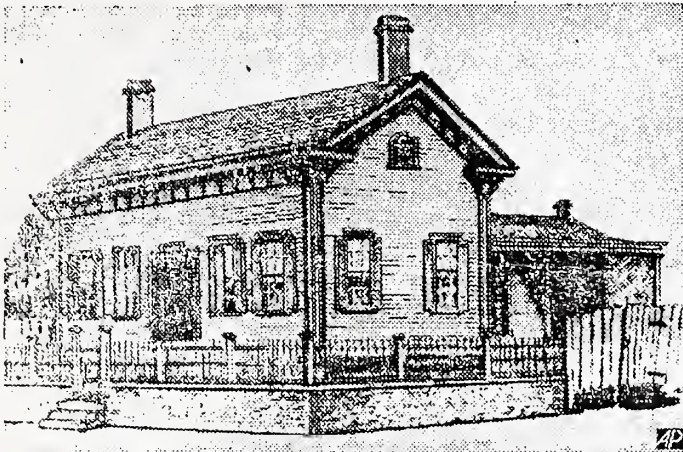
Mr. Roll went to Springfield after helping build the boat, and has lived there continuously for seventy years. He was called in by Mrs. Lincoln when she added a story to the house which Mr. Lincoln had bought a few years previously. According to Mr. Roll's version, Mrs. Lincoln decided their means justified a more pretentious house, and while Mr. Lincoln was away on the circuit she had the additional story put on. Mr. Roll did the plastering on the house, and as part pay for his work took six black walnut doors, which he since has made up into furniture and cut up into cases as mementoes of the Lincoln homestead. When Lincoln got back from the circuit he met a friend and asked him if he knew where Mrs. Lincoln lived. This was his way of taking the changes made in his old home by his wife during his absence.

The change Mr. Roll had taken part in whereby the house had been changed so that the owner did not know it did not affect Mr. Lincoln's kindly feeling toward his early associates on the Sangamon River. Mr. Roll said, and when Mr. Lincoln went to Washington he gave Mr. Roll his thanks and

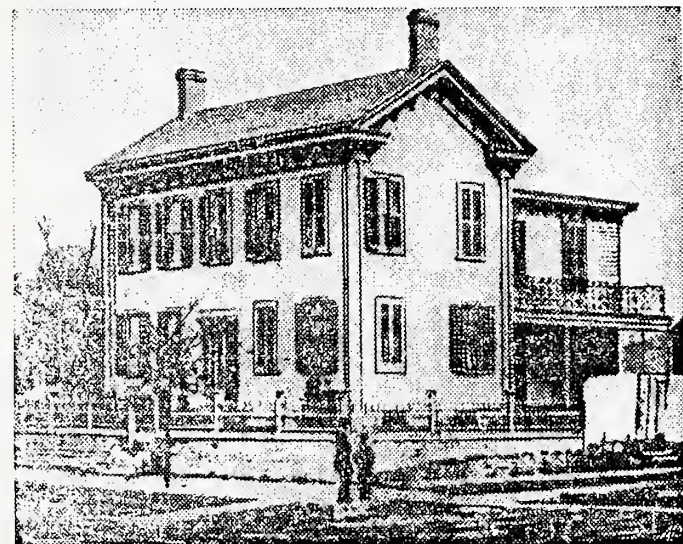
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Chicago
1910

Mrs. Lincoln Surprised Abe With Home Remodeling Project



Abe Lincoln's Springfield home, which he bought in 1844 for about \$1,500. His wife didn't like the house.



How Mrs. Lincoln remodeled the house, while Abe was out of town. She added a second story for \$1,300. This home improvement, 100 years ago, turned out to make history.

2-9-56

Lincoln's Birthday this year, in the midst of the national home improvement campaign, brings up an interesting modernization project that was put over on Honest Abe by his wife exactly 100 years ago.

Mrs. Lincoln apparently was no exception to the rule of women being admittedly the prime movers in home improvement.

In fact, she had the Lincoln home in Springfield, Ill., completely remodeled from a story and a half to a big two-story house while Circuit Lawyer Abe was out of town.

She wanted to surprise her husband when he came home, and she certainly did.

She had spent \$1,200 on her modernization project. That was a lot of money in those days. It was about as much as Lincoln had originally paid for the house.

According to the story, Lincoln came striding up to his property at the corner of Eighth and Jackson Sts., carrying a beefsteak under his arm, and he didn't know his own house. But he got to like it all right.

The family sitting room, which measured 16 by 20 feet, and an adjoining formal parlor that opened through a large double door, soon became a frequent meeting place for Abe's political associates.

Didn't Like House

Mary Todd Lincoln had that house remodeled because she did not like it. You've probably heard that reason in connection with modern remodeling jobs. And she seemed to be a woman who could get what she wanted. She always said Lincoln would land in the White House.

But Mrs. Lincoln had been very disappointed when Abe bought the house in 1844 from the Rev. Charles Dresser.

Even though her husband would show her the solidity of its hand-hewn oak construction, wooden pegs, walnut clapboards and shingles, she thought the house was ugly and wanted a bigger house.

However, the house had seven rooms, several fireplaces and occupied a lot 50 by 152 feet, which also contained a woodshed, privy and carriage shed.

In order to save up enough money to buy the place, Lincoln spent virtually nothing on himself, even giving up his handball games

which had cost him 10 cents per game.

One drawback to the house was that two bedrooms upstairs had such low ceilings where Lincoln could stand erect only in the center under the ridge of the roof. Mrs. Lincoln fixed that.

She raised the roof 12 feet, added several bedrooms upstairs, installed new wood stoves in place of fireplaces and had bookshelves built for Abraham's law library.

Amount Paid Not Clear

The exact amount that Lincoln had paid for the house is not entirely clear. Carl Sandburg in "The Prairie Years" says the deal involved \$750 in cash, plus a lot Lincoln owned which was valued at \$300.

However, Sandburg notes there was a mortgage for \$900 on the property which was not mentioned in the deed, Lincoln apparently trusting Mr. Dresser to get rid of it.

A contract in Lincoln's handwriting mentions \$1,200 as the price, but some historians say the final price was actually \$1,500.

We asked Myron Matthews of the Dow Service Building Reports to give us an estimate of what it would cost to build that house today. He figured that \$20,000 might do it, with \$5,000 added for the lot. In some ways this puts a pretty low value on today's dollar.

It just happened that about the time Mrs. Lincoln was modernizing her house, one Thomas R. Marshall was being born — the man who later became famous for saying "What this country needs is a good five-cent cigar."

You might say that what this country needs now is a good five-cent building dollar.

Mary Lincoln--An Original 'Remodelor'

FEB 11 1956

★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★

She added 2nd Story to Abe's Home (While He Was Out of Town)

By DAVID G. BAREUTHER
AP Real Estate Editor

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Mrs. Lincoln apparently was no exception to the rule of women being admittedly the prime movers in home improvement. In fact, she had the Lincoln home in Springfield, Ill., completely remodeled from a story and a half to a big two-story house while Circuit Lawyer Abe was out of town. She wanted to surprise her husband when he came home, and she certainly did. She had spent \$1,300 on her modernization project. That was a lot of money in those days. It was about as much as Lincoln had originally paid for the house.

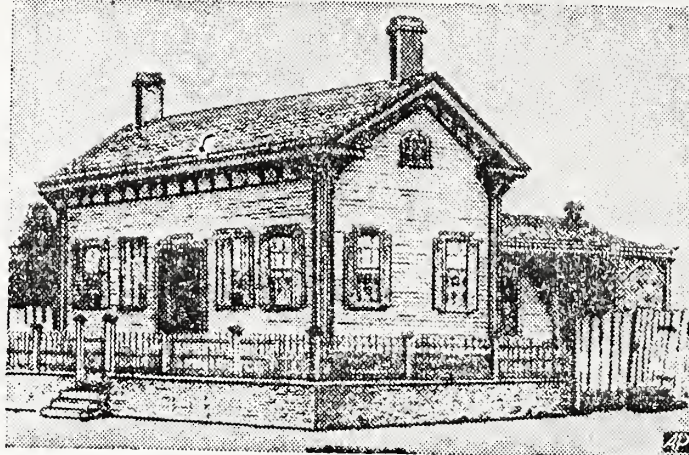
According to the story, Lincoln came striding up to his property at the corner of Eighth and Jackson Sts., carrying a beefsteak under his arm, and he didn't know his own house. But he got to like it all right. The family sitting room, which measured 16 by 20 feet, and adjoining formal parlor that opened through a large double door, soon became a frequent meeting place for Abe's political associates.

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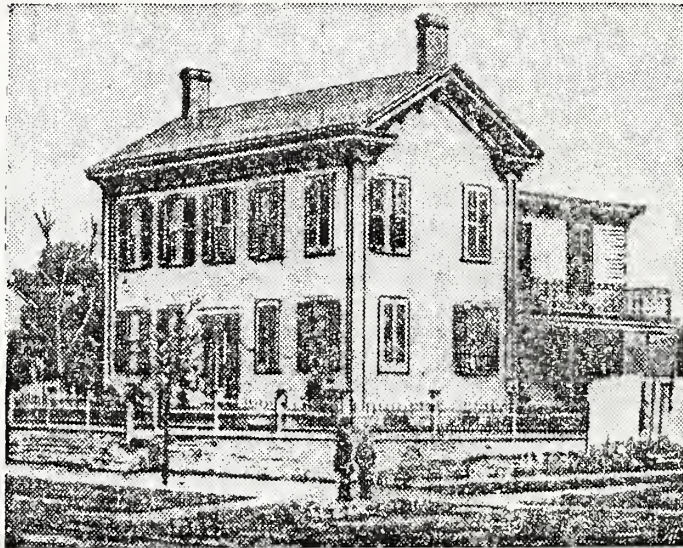
But Mrs. Lincoln had been very disappointed when Abe bought the house in 1844 from the Rev. Charles Dresser. Even though her husband would show her the solidity of its hand-hewn oak construction, wooden pegs, walnut clapboards and shingles, she thought the house was ugly and wanted a bigger house.

However, the house had seven rooms, several fireplaces and occupied a lot 50 by 152 feet, which also contained a woodshed, privy and carriage shed. In order to save up enough money to buy the place, Lincoln spent virtually nothing on himself, even giving up his handball games which had cost him 10 cents per game.

One drawback to the house was that two bedrooms upstairs had such low ceilings where Lincoln could stand erect only in the cen-



LINCOLN'S ORIGINAL SPRINGFIELD HOME—Abe bought this house in 1844 for about \$1,500. His wife didn't like it, so...



THEN WIFE REMODELED—While Abe was out of town, Mrs. Lincoln added a second story for \$1,300. This home improvement, 100 years ago, turned out to make history.

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Dunbar Mayor Visited Old Lincoln Home

Incidents in Abraham Lincoln's home life have been described to D. L. Salisbury, mayor of Dunbar, by several men, who as small boys, played with the children of the Lincoln family.

One was Isaac R. Miller at whose home in Springfield, Ill., Mayor Salisbury was entertained while he was engaged in research into Lincoln's life. Diller's father owned the drugstore, where Lincoln and his neighbors frequently gathered.

Diller's guestbook, Mayor Salisbury said, is like an index of famous Americans. Among those registered are presidents, cabinet officers, senators, representatives, governors and figures in other walks of life, including James Whitcomb Riley, Ida Tarbell and Julia Ward Howe.

Robert Cadden Key, who was about 95 when interviewed in 1943, was a son of a native of Monroe County and a descendant of Francis Scott Key, author of "The Star Spangled Banner."

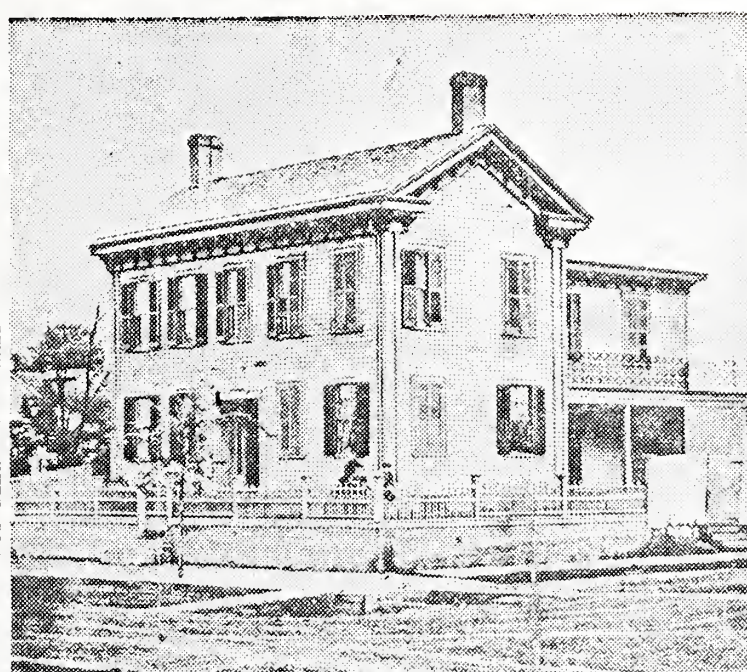
As a boy he knew both Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas and both knew him. He was about 12 years old, when he met Lincoln on Feb. 9, 1961, two days before Lincoln left for Washington. They met at 5th and Monroe Sts., Springfield, he said, and Lincoln embraced him and invited him to come to the White House to see him, but he never managed to get there.

John L. Rall, another old-timer interviewed by Salisbury, was the son of a carpenter who built the second story over the bungalow which was the original Lincoln home in Springfield.

According to Rall, Salist Lincoln's wife had urged h

and again to have a second floor built to the dwelling, but Lincoln kept putting it off. Finally, while Lincoln was away on a circuit trip as a lawyer, his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, inherited some money and immediately ordered the construction of the second floor. According to the story, Lincoln returned home at night, and was surprised and perplexed when he saw a two-story house instead of a bungalow, and knocked at the door of a neighbor's home to ask "Where does the Lincoln family live?"

Mayor Salisbury owns a photostat copy of a survey made by Lincoln which was given to him by W. O. Withrow, superintendent of schools of Sangamon County, Ill., in which Springfield is situated. Supt. Withrow is related to the Kanawha County Withrows.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S HOME in Springfield, Ill., the only home he ever owned, is shown as it looked when Lincoln was elected President of the United States. The picture was taken from a photograph owned by Isaac R. Diller, who was born within a block of the Lincoln home and who was in Charleston in 1942, when he was a guest of D. L. Salisbury, the local authority on Lincoln's life. The house is now surrounded by shade trees.

Lincoln's Wife Remodeled Home While He Was Away

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story house while Circuit Lawyer Abe was out of town. She wanted to surprise her husband when he came home, and she certainly did. She had spent \$1300 on her modernization project. That was a lot

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Turn to LINCOLN, Page 2

Lincoln

Continued from Page 1

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Just Didn't Like It

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But Mrs. Lincoln had been very disappointed when Abe bought the house in 1844 from Rev. Charles Dresser. Even though her husband would show her the solidity of its hand-hewn oak construction, wooden pegs, walnut clapboards and shingles, she thought the house was ugly and wanted a bigger house.

However, the house had seven rooms, several fireplaces and occupied a lot 50 by 152 feet, which also contained a woodshed, privy and carriage shed. In order to save up enough money to buy the place, Lincoln spent virtually nothing on himself, even giving up his handball games which had cost him 10 cents per game.

Raises Roof

One drawback to the house was that two bedrooms which had such low ceilings that Lincoln could stand erect only in the center under the ridge of the roof. Mrs. Lincoln fixed that. She raised the roof 12 feet, added several bedrooms upstairs, installed new wood stoves in place of fireplaces and had bookshelves built for Abraham's law library.

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Other Figures

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Mary Todd Lincoln Had Illinois Home Remodeled While Husband Was Away

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Circuit Lawyer Abe was out of town. She wanted to surprise her husband when he came home.

Her modernization project cost \$1,300, about as much as Lincoln had originally paid for the house.

According to the story, Lincoln came striding up to his property at the corner of Eighth and Jackson streets, carrying a beefsteak under his arm.

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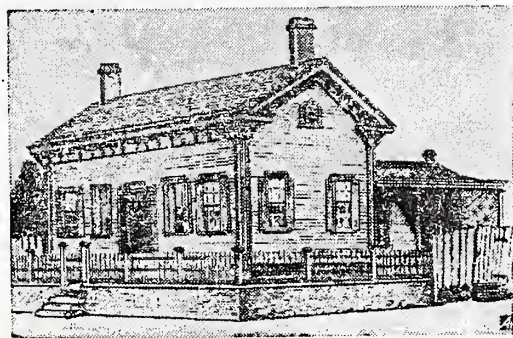
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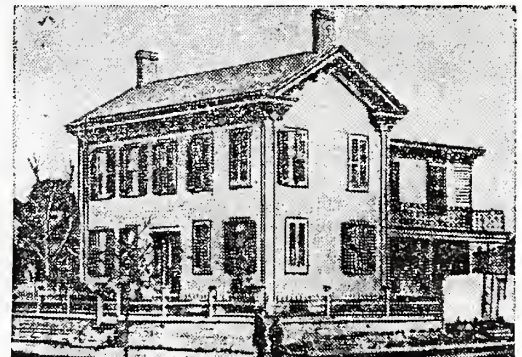
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LINCOLN'S HOME (BEFORE)—Abe Lincoln's Springfield home, which he bought in 1844 for about \$1,500, didn't have room for him to stand erect—at least, not on the second floor.



THE SAME HOUSE (AFTER)—Here is the way the house looked after Mrs. Lincoln had it remodeled while the future president was out of town. She had a second story added for \$1,300.

Lincoln Always Ready for Joke; Tries To Fool Wife Passing House She Altered in His Absence, Tale

By LOUIS J. HUMPHREY
Staff Correspondent, International
News Service
SPRINGFIELD, Ill., Feb. 12.—"You
know, a person can tell a genuine
Abraham story every time," Jacob

L. Thompson, Lincoln enthusiast and collector, remarked today, the day on which the world is observing the 118th anniversary of the birth of the Emancipator. "Many of the anecdotes attributed to Lincoln never knew him. His humor was so pointed, so philosophical, and so good-natured that one can not mistake it."

Thompson, who besides being a student of Lincolnia, is one of Illinois' ablest attorneys and assistant state superintendent of public instruction, today gave new anecdotes and details of Lincoln's life in Springfield.

Years of close association with men and women who knew Lincoln personally, of familiarity with the haunts of the Civil war president, and delving into Lincoln lore have given Thompson a wealth of material.

"I'm always glad to add to the world's knowledge of Lincoln when I can," he said today, as he sat at his desk in the Centennial building which stands on the site of the Ninian Edwards homestead, where Lincoln was married. "We must, however, be accurate.

Married in 1842

"Lincoln and Mary Todd were married No. 4, 1842, and on Aug. 1, 1843, Robert Todd Lincoln, their first child was born. Those dates are correct. At that time the Lincolns lived at the Old Globe tavern, kept by a Mrs. Beck.

"Now, I'll vouch for the truth of this story. The Lincolns paid \$4 a week for their room and board. When Robert was born their friends and neighbors joined in congratulating them. One of these was Edward Thayer, who for many years conducted a drygoods store on the south side of the courthouse square. It still is operated under that name. Thayer told me this story himself several times. It probably will bring you a flood of protesting letters, but it's true nevertheless.

"You know Lincoln had extremely long legs, while Mrs. Lincoln was small in stature."

Thompson paused, arose from his desk and demonstrated how Lincoln's great height was largely in the length of leg from knee to ankle. He resumed his seat and went on.

"Well, one day Thayer met Lincoln on the street and offered his congratulations on Lincoln being a father of a son and on the fact that 'mother and child were doing as well as could be expected.'

Lincoln Scared

"Lincoln thanked him, 'But I was scared,' he added.

"Why?" Thayer asked. "What alarmed you?"

"Well," Lincoln drawled, "I was afraid it might have one leg like Mary's and one like mine?"

Chuckling, Thompson continued:

"Contrary to the popular belief, the Lincolns did not move directly from the Globe tavern to their residence at Eighth and Jackson streets, Springfield, the only home they ever owned. Lincoln purchased this house from Rev. Charles Dresser on May 15, 1844.

"Young Bob Lincoln was possessed of a pair of powerful lungs. He cried often and lustily. The other boarders at the Globe were greatly annoyed by his wailing. Something of their annoyance must have reached the Lincolns. Anyway, they decided to move.

Move to Cottage

"So they left the Globe, but instead of moving to the Eighth and Jackson street residence, they went into a little one-story house located at 214 South Fourth street, where the Argus hotel now stands. There are a good many folks still living who remember this cottage. It stood immediately on the street, so that when one stepped from the front door he immediately found himself on the street.

"You know, the houses in those days were built so that there was plenty of space in the rear for a garden. You'll notice that the homestead at Eighth and Jackson is built exactly the same way.

"The Lincolns remained in this little home until they moved into the Eighth street residence. Why, they must have stayed in that little cottage for over six months."

Thompson smiled, then said:

"Here's one you may not have heard.

"The Lincoln home at Eighth and Jackson streets was a story and one-half house, standing on what was then the outskirts of the village of Springfield. Of course now it is practically in the downtown district. In those days, the evidence of aristocracy was a house with a two story

back. That meant a house in which the second story ran clear to the rear.

"Mrs. Lincoln was consumed with a desire that her house have a 'two story back.' This wish grew stronger day by day.

"So one time when Lincoln was away from the city, riding his 'law circuit,' Mrs. Lincoln called in the carpenters and told them what she wanted. Much hammering and sawing ensued. And Mrs. Lincoln finally saw in a few weeks her dreams become a reality, and the 'two story back' finally was completed.

Turns Joke on Spouse

"Incidentally the one-story kitchen now attached to the Lincoln homestead was not there when the Lincolns had the house. It was added later by another family.

"Anyhow, shortly after the remodeling was completed, Lincoln returned to Springfield and walked down Eighth street to his home. He observed the change at once, so instead of turning in he walked on a few steps past the house. On the street crossing he met an urchin.

"Now, Mrs. Lincoln, awaiting anxiously the way Abe would view the changed house, was listening at the window, but if Lincoln saw her he gave no sign.

"'Bub,' he demanded loudly, 'Can you tell me where Abe Lincoln lives?'

"'Come in here, you old fool,' Mrs. Lincoln called loudly from the house. 'You know well enough where you are.' The neighbors all joined in the laugh that followed.

"You know, language like that carried no offense in those days. I'll prove that to you, then I'm done.

"After Lincoln was elected president, Mrs. Lincoln remarked one day, 'What am I to be when you get to be president?'

"'Why, the same old fool you've always been,' Lincoln replied, with a kindly smile."

Residence
Before

Global

Journalist

LETTERS REVEALED

Mrs. Lincoln Refused To Live in Old Home

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP)—Eight hitherto unpublished letters of widowed Mary Todd Lincoln reveal she was distressed in 1866 at a suggestion she live in Abraham Lincoln's old Springfield residence with its strong memories of a dead son and husband.

She died at her sister's home in Springfield in 1882 and is buried there in the tomb with her husband and three of their four sons.

King V. Hostick, a Springfield collector, Saturday identified the letters as being signed by Mrs. Lincoln a year after Abraham Lincoln's assassination in 1865.

Then she was living, apparently in financial hardship, in a Chicago boarding house with her sons Robert and Tad. Efforts were being made by Simon Cameron to raise \$20,000 or more to aid her purchase of a home.

Her letters were addressed to Cameron, who had been secretary of war in Lincoln's first administration.

The letters do not disclose the disposition of Lincoln's net estate of \$110,296, left to Mrs. Lincoln and the then surviving children, Robert and Tad.

In later years, Congress granted Mrs. Lincoln an annual pension of \$5,000 and a gift of \$15,000. The Springfield home was given by Robert Lincoln to Illinois in 1887.

Referring to a Judge Davis, Mrs. Lincoln in an April, 1866, letter quoted the judge as saying she should return to Springfield and live.

"After the many years of happi-

ness there with my idolized husband, to place me in the home deprived of his presence and the darling boy, we lost in Washington (Willie), it would not require a day for me to lose my entire reason," she wrote.

"After the death of my little Willie, my loving and indulgent husband told me, that he would never carry me back to a place which would remind us both of so great a loss."

Mrs. Lincoln said "living in a boarding house is most revolting to my sons and myself" and would have been "a most aggravating sorrow" to Lincoln. She asked Cameron to destroy the letters.

The 151st anniversary of Lincoln's birth will be observed Friday.

8 MARY TODD LETTERS FOUND

By Tom Littlewood
Sun-Times Bureau

SPRINGFIELD—Abraham Lincoln's widow thought Chicago was a bad influence on her sons.

As for her Springfield home, Mary Todd Lincoln once recalled that her husband told her as they were departing for Washington "that he would not carry me back there again."

Eight unpublished letters written by Mrs. Lincoln a year after her husband's assassination have cast new light on her thoughts during that period.

King V. Hostick of Springfield, a commercial collector of historical documents, announced discovery of the letters Saturday. The source was not revealed.

He said they were written in 1866 from Chicago, where Mrs. Lincoln and her sons, Robert and Tad, lived in the Clifton House, which she described as a "genteel boarding house," at Madison and Wabash.

"My oldest son is pained and mortified continually and my little Taddie, the idol of his darling father, is hourly thrown with persons and hears expressions in the place where we are (considered the most genteel boarding place in the city"), wrote Mrs. Lincoln.

Worried About Finances

The letters were addressed to Simon Cameron, secretary of war in the early days of Lincoln's administration.

They add further details to Mrs. Lincoln's known obsessive worry over finances. From other sources it has been established that she was comfortably provided for.

Cameron sought to raise \$20,000 for a permanent home for Lincoln's family, the letters disclose.

LIVING

TWO VIEWS OF U.S. DE

Why Ike, Gen

By Thomas B. Ross

Sun-Times Bureau

WASHINGTON — Despite the bitter and complicated argument, the great defense debate was reduced last week to a simple question: At the height of the Soviet Union's missile superiority from mid-1961 to mid-1964, will the United States be able to get its bombers and rockets off the ground before they are destroyed by surprise attack?

President Eisenhower said yes. Gen. Thomas S. Power, chief of the Strategic Air Command, said no.

Variety Of Weapons

The President contended the United States will have such a variety of potent weapons—Air Force bombers, Navy carrier

planes, intercontinental missile submarine-launched rockets—that the Russians could not hope to destroy them all in one swoop.

The general implied that but SAC's bombers would be unreliable and they, too, could be destroyed if a sizable number were not airborne at all times far away from vulnerable bases.

Although the two positions ran directly counter to each other, they were based on several assumptions accepted both sides:

1 At present and for at least another year, the United States will clearly have the military strength to forestall a Russian attack.

2 From the middle of 1961 to the middle of 1964, the Russians

ation Honors Civil War Leader Again Today

ghbor's Diary Reveals cts in Lincolns' Lives

and the nation will pause today in the midst of conflict to honor Abraham Lincoln, the President.

scheduled a solemn observance of the 146th of Lincoln's birthday.

onal observance of the day centered on the Illinois capital, which claims the Ken- President as its most revered citizen.

officials and private citizens alike will make to the Great Emancipator's tomb in Oak bury, where his body was buried after it was om Washington in 1865.

hers will pay their respects at the Quaker se near downtown Springfield and at the re- ge of New Salem, where Lincoln lived as a

★ ★ ★
als plan to open ms in the Lincoln ingfield.

is now a shrine most half a million across the nation foreign countries

irs bedrooms, re- ke them as nearly the same as they Lincoln and his for Washington in ot been opened to nce the house was the state in 1878 incoln.

only the down- of the home has or visitors.

discovered diary is orians fill in some blank year" in the in and his family.

was kept by Mrs. Black, a neighbor of here for about six ate 1851 and early other documents n the possession of son, Malcolm A. emay, Mo.

ently released—for udy—the diary and Mrs. Mary Todd Mrs. Black. A nine- of excerpts and diary will be pub- Spring issue of the

State Historian Dr. Harry Pratt says the diary covers a period that is "a blank year in Lincoln's life," except for records of his travels on the court circuit and his political activity.

Mrs. Black's diary concerns her life in Springfield from January through May, 1852, and a few entries in the following months in St. Louis, where her husband operated a store.

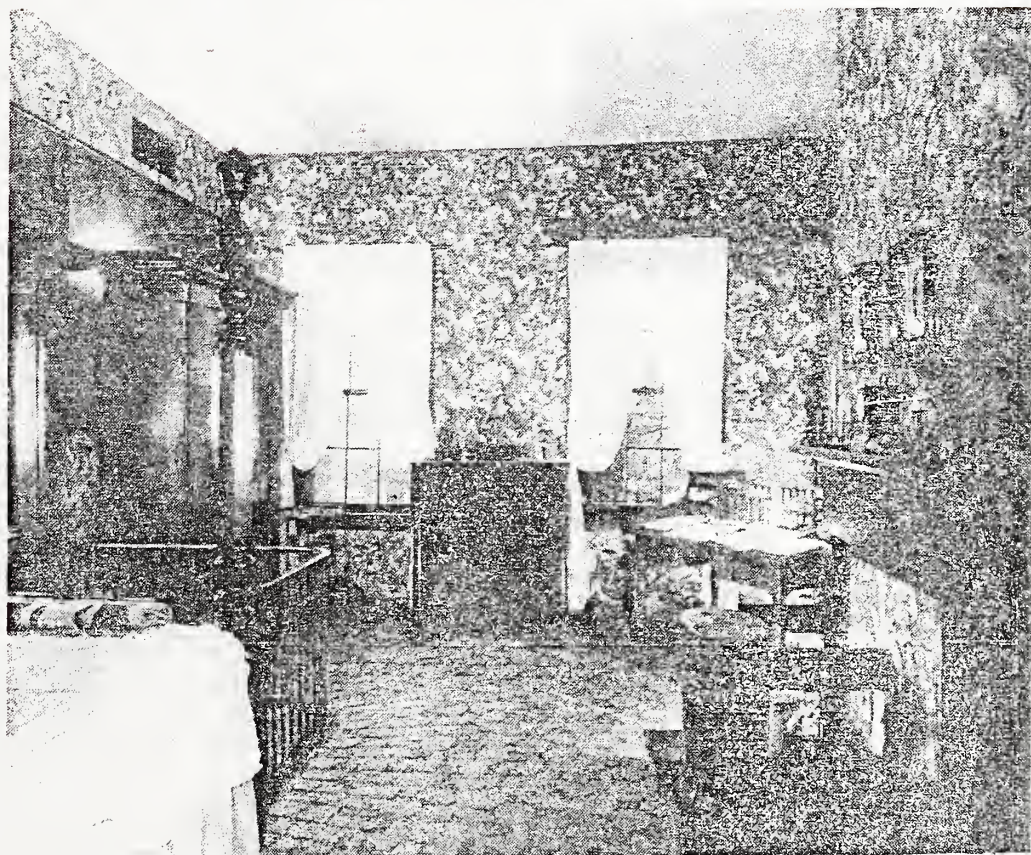
Mrs. Lincoln's letter was written Sept. 17, 1853. She asked Mrs. Black to get her "a white fur hat for a boy of six months" (her son Tad) and a "drawn satin bonnet," presumably for herself.

The future President's wife said she had the trim materials for the bonnet and would sew them on herself.

Mrs. Lincoln was concerned with fashion in writing about the hats, stating, "I presume ere this the Fall styles have been received."

She also made a joking reference that it was all right if the price went above "Four Dollars" because "it will last all my boys." Tad was her youngest child.

Pratt said the diary "shows



LINCOLN'S BEDROOM—The public will view today the restoration of President Lincoln's Springfield, Ill., home. Restored at a cost of \$60,000 the room contains the chest and straight-back chair, left background, which Lincoln used. The others are period pieces. Glass panelled wall paper is original with other paper copied.

It begins with a New Year's Day entry ("took tea at Mrs. Lincoln's") and traces Mrs. Black's growing friendship with Lincoln's wife and her dependence on Mrs. Lincoln for comfort after Mrs. Black's son died March 24.

Mrs. Black's husband was establishing his store in St. Louis at this time and was home in- termittently. He returned home

"I was cast into the very depths of despair," Mrs. Black wrote. "I felt as though I could not live longer separated from him—in bitter anguish I cried unto the Lord to prepare me for death and then take me from this world of suffering."

Six days later she went to an "Inquiry Meeting" at the First Presbyterian Church, where

going to a Baptist service with Mrs. Lincoln and another lady and commented, "I laughed all the way home at Mrs. L. and Dr. Smith." Pratt said the subject was unknown.

After this "Inquiry Meeting," Mrs. Black went to church almost daily. In mid-April she, Mrs. Lincoln and two other women were admitted to the First Presbyterian Church.

scolded herself for her "cold and formal devotions" the day before.

That night, after her husband departed, she went to Mrs. Lincoln's, who insisted on our coming down." She found Dr. Smith there and "he prayed with us" before leaving.

During these months, Lincoln was mainly out of Springfield, riding a court circuit that

(incomplete)

